

STATINTL

Senate's Performance . . . By Roscoe Drummond

Verdict: Well Done

HOW would you rate the United States Senate? Good, bad, fair, disgraceful, excellent?

You may have occasion to ask yourself this question more than once as the Senate Ethics Committee continues its investigation of Senator Thomas J. Dodd of Connecticut.



Drummond

The Dodd investigation is of national concern if it develops that any misdeeds on Dodd's part are also misdeeds of the Senate as a whole and reflect adversely on the integrity and the ability of the Senate to do its job well and worthily.

The quick impression seems to be that in investigating the ethics of Senator Dodd, the Senate is really putting itself on trial and that the verdict is already evident: guilty.

I dissent from the extreme critics who suggest that

worthiness has evaporated from public life and that low ethics in the Senate is rampant. And I dissent from the Senate's most prejudiced defenders — the Senators themselves—who cherish the myth that they are all "honorable men" and can do no wrong—or at least not very much.

If you look at some of the things the Senate has done badly or how it has acted unworthily in recent years, it seems inescapable that the Senate has lowered itself in public esteem.

THERE was the long, harrowing period of McCarthyism during which, for the most part, the Senate stood mute and immobile as so much harm and injustice was done to so many people by the methods of meat-axe accusation and guilt-by-association.

Later came the Bobby Baker scandal which revealed the Senate's highest appointive officer using his position and his power as majority secretary to further

his personal financial interest.

And now the Dodd matter which, whatever the outcome, cannot fail to injure the Senator and the Senate.

But there is another side to the record and it urgently deserves to be kept in mind.

In the end the Senate took its own initiative to contain McCarthy with Senator Margaret Chase Smith's magnificent "declaration of conscience" and Senator Ralph Flanders's censure motion and Senator Arthur V. Watkins's steadfast conduct of the hearing.

It was the dogged fact-digging of Senator John J. Williams of Delaware which forced the Bobby Baker investigation and did most to keep the heat on the investigators.

AS A RESULT of the Baker affair the Senate created an ethics committee of respected Senators who are now in the midst of investigating one of the Senate's very own.

It is not the intention of this column to condone any of the dubious activities of individual Senators, but the crucial test of whether the U.S. Senate is doing its work well and worthily is its total legislative record.

On this criterion I believe

there can be no valid current judgment other than: well done. From 1957 to 1966 it will have passed a long sequence of needed civil rights laws, a wise tax reduction in 1964, constructive social measures, necessary Federal aid to education—and has supported the President in foreign policy without abandoning its right to advise and dissent.

I do not prejudge the Dodd investigation—either for or against—but it is fair to note Senator Dodd cast his influence and his votes on all of these matters on the side of the overwhelming majority. Some may think that the Senate is not as great as it used to be. It probably never was. But its recent record of achievement is better than it has been for many years.

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